

A  
L E T T E R

T O T H E

Reverend Vicar of SAVOY:

T O B E L E F T A T

J. J. ROUSSEAU's.

Translated from the GERMAN of

MR. JUSTUS MÖSER,

Councillor of the HIGH-COURT OF JUSTICE  
at OSNABRUCK, &c. &c.

By JOACH. ANDR. FRED. WARNECKE, L L. C.

A NATIVE OF OSNABRUCK.

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The SECOND EDITION Corrected.

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L O N D O N,

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TO HIS EXCELLENCY  
BARON DE BEHR,  
MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE AFFAIRS  
OF HANOVER.

SIR,

THIS *English* Translation from the  
*German* Original of the celebrated  
Mr. MOSER, I make bold to inscribe to  
Your Excellency. — Not with a design to  
make a panegyric on this occasion, which,  
tho' your shining qualities justly merit, I  
am sensible your modesty would not per-  
mit; nor merely to return you my most  
humble thanks for the kind patronage and  
affectionate protection that your Excellency  
has been pleased to favour me with ever  
since my arrival in England; as a faithful  
observance of my duty can be the only  
means of expressing my gratitude, I mean,

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by



by this dedication only to shew my respect to you as a Connoisseur in the Belles Lettres, and as a Patriot, who takes part in the honour of his countrymen, when their talents and taste for the liberal arts are properly displayed.

THIS humorous production of our Author I have ventured to submit to the acute judgment and refined taste of the English nation in their own language, an attempt too great for one who has been acquainted with it the short space of two years only ; but when my reasons are given, I am in hopes your Excellency will pardon the presumption of the Translator.

THAT I should have chosen *this* piece as my first sally will not, in my opinion, require any excuse either to your Excellency or the Public, the talents of the Author being so well known, and his inimitable skill in displaying with a lively and often with a humorous turn, the finest thoughts and most useful truths, which I doubt not may be easily discovered in this feeble translation.



tion. The solid wit and pleasing stile, interspersed with *Attic salt*, whereby Mr. *Rousseau* is herein refuted, (being attacked intirely in his own way, and his system disproved chiefly by his own arguments) will sufficiently distinguish our Author from being too serious an opponent, like Mr. *Formey*, who is in every other respect an excellent writer. And further, I must confess to your Excellency, that an eminent writer of the English nation has approved of my choice.

It may perhaps be justly alleged, that I am too presumptuous in attempting to express in a foreign language, those pleasing and masterly turns with which my original so amply abounds; but, notwithstanding these difficulties, I hope your Excellency will give me leave to mention the reasons which first induced me to engage in this arduous task.

As several English translations from the German language have already been pre-  
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sented

presented to the Public, to the general dissatisfaction of all who perused them\*, and having always found the fault lay in the translation, not in the original, I was tempted to prove the truth hereof by undertaking this translation, being in hopes that notwithstanding the faults of the translator, the beauties of the original might still be felt by the reader, if a just elucidation of the author's thoughts were given, to which former translators seldom or never have attained.

My original is a production of such a nature, that were a stranger to attempt a translation of it, he would find a thousand difficulties arise from the satirical turns of wit and humour in the author, who, in the most pleasing manner, uses such idioms, metaphors and proverbs as are suitable to the manners, customs and dispositions of

\* For instance, *Klopstock's Messiah*, and *Rabener's Satires*.

the nation in whose language he writes; I therefore dare affirm, that if an Englishman had translated this humorous piece, he would certainly have overlooked a great number of beauties which arise from the above-mentioned sources, in every page of this work. This observation has already been made by *Voltaire* on the works of *Swift* and *Butler*.

A FURTHER inducement was, that I might preserve the remembrance of Mr. *Moser* amongst his *English* friends, who always expressed the greatest regard for him, both on account of his private amiable character and great knowledge, as well as the prudence with which he conducted affairs during the late war in Germany, so much for the interest of the British army, that even a PRINCE, whom all the world may easily guess at, though out of reverence I conceal his name, could not help admiring, and even publicly applauding him for it.

To this I may venture to add the desire I likewise had of shewing *my friends in*  
*England,*



*England*, on this occasion, the love I bear to the language of their country, and my respect to a Nation with which the *German* Nation is so closely connected, partly by one common Origin, and principally by one common and most excellent Sovereign.

If this juvenile essay should meet with the approbation of your Excellency, it will be no small encouragement to a future attempt from him, who remains, with the profoundest respect and veneration,

YOUR EXCELLENCY'S

*most obliged, and*

*most obedient, humble servant,*

J. A. F. WARNECKE.

A

# LETTER

TO THE

Reverend Vicar of SAVOY.

REVEREND SIR,

I AM very sorry, that the confession of your faith, so long concealed from the public, should at length have fallen into the hands of a person, who has immediately communicated it to the world. Most probably, you intended to seal it up with a malediction, like the philosophers stone, that it might be viewed only by adepts. This I have great reason to suppose, by the careful attention you have all along shewn to your small community, and by that awful devotion with which you have always attended divine service in your parish, notwithstanding your own private sentiments. — I am sorry, I say, that your friend has not shewn the same attention to the people in Europe, that you have to those assembled in your congregations in the mountains.

tains.—Wise and prudent legislators and founders of states always distinguished between private and public religion, by which they shewed a true knowledge of human nature, and of what the different abilities of men would bear. It perhaps would not be amiss sometimes to follow their example. Even the primitive church concealed some secrets, from their novices, which it was judged improper to disclose too soon.

HOWEVER, Sir, the fault is committed, and the scandal given, and all that can be done by you or others, is to make a proper atonement. —“ You acknowledge a God, assert conscience to “ be our judge, and admit of eternal Punishments “ and Rewards.”—This appears to be the sum of your doctrine, and these principles are esteemed by you the only sure and safe guides, so that we may dispense with all others. Were this intended for the SECRET DOCTRINE of a few Æmilius’s, who, to a naturally good disposition, joined the advantage of a good education, then should I have considered it silently, and perhaps might have called such orderly creatures happy, who could be guided by so slender a thread; but as this is intended for an UNIVERSAL DOCTRINE, which ought to contain *chains for rogues and villains, various motives and encouragements for the timorous and faint-*  
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hearted,



*bearded, as well as principles of consolation under the most cruel tortures, and force to restrain tyrannical power, &c.* I must confess, Sir, your plan is too confined, and your arguments are by far too weak, for all these purposes. Neither can I think it right to form a religion only for philosophers, or persons capable of reflection; on the contrary it appears to me a very new and singular idea, to cherish your downy-bearded Æmilius's at the expence of the rest of the world.

I PRESUME you have long ago made this observation,—“ That ESTABLISHED RELIGION generally took place at the institution of every civil society; and that the doctrine of the Gods first made its appearance in the genealogy of the first founders of states, and was introduced by their legislative power.” — Upon a little consideration we may soon find out the reason why persons who were fully resolved to tyrannize over their fellow-creatures, were under a necessity of using such instruments. We may soon discover, that NATURAL RELIGION might suit an individual in a desert island, or a single family in a wilderness; but a people associated to an equal condition of life, whose possessions lie contiguous, are liable to so many alluring temptations, that more powerful motives and restraints than NATURAL RELIGION

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can yield, are required to actuate and guide them; and that no legislator could contrive such motives and restraints, without using *artificial assistance*.

Now let us once friendly suppose, *civil society* was absolutely necessary to render the world happy, or at least less unhappy, would you have some man of superior genius produce out of his own brain a pretended *Nemesis* or an *Astrea*, in order to have the seal of sanctity impressed by them to enforce certain duties, in case his fellow creatures would not longer be ruled or governed merely by sense and reason? Or would you rather have him disable their feet, as the inhabitants of *China* do those of their wives, in order to maintain public tranquillity and happiness amongst his new created citizens? Perhaps you will think both these unnecessary, and even the establishment of large societies superfluous; because every man might have been a good philosopher, and might have lived by himself upon the rough mountains of *Savoy* in peace and tranquillity. — Nay, you may perhaps go farther, and affirm, “ that men would have  
 “ been much happier without being troubled  
 “ with either fear or love, and without the ne-  
 “ cessity of requiring the assistance of society in  
 “ the enjoyment of life.” — But don’t let us be ill-humoured, and carry our arguments to too  
 great

great a length, but let us in a friendly manner suppose, that the children of Adam had produced, by degrees, some thousands of wicked grand-children, intirely independent of each other, and that they had lived together in a large wilderness, in the quality of herdsmen, and had at last quarrelled concerning the pasture; and let us further suppose them not to have been educated in the school of Mr. *Roussseau*, but to have been of the same stamp with the hussars, which we, in the present age, notwithstanding the multiplicity of teachers and preachers, sometimes meet with, what do you think would have proceeded from this intestine commotion? A *leader*, I am apt to believe, would have been chosen on both sides; a *power* would have been established to unite a multitude of persons in one design, as well to discipline and restrain, as to punish, hang, burn, and destroy whole crews of them at once, if necessity required it. Who then do you think in such a crisis would have been chosen their *general* or *commander*? In their wrath, I presume, the most strenuous and valiant. But when that was subsided? Undoubtedly out of gratitude their deliverer.—But suppose now, that their zeal and gratitude should be abated, and that pride, jealousy, envy, and resentment, should raise a rebellion, so that none would longer obey, but every one command, and that at the same time



unexpected dangers from abroad should render it absolutely necessary to keep up with the greatest strictness, a good disposition of the state, to support the laws, to preserve order, to enforce taxations, and maintain other good regulations; by what means, in such a case, could a man of superior genius possess himself of such a degree of *power*, as would be *necessary* to prevent his own ruin, and the destruction of his friends? The dignity of a princely descent, which now-a-days stands in the room of a divine genealogy, could have been to him of no use at all. The herdsmen would have laughed at a bonnet set round with shining stones, at a coat furred with ermine, or at a cylinder with its two ends tipped with gold; no body amongst them had been born with a helmet on his head, and no body persuaded to take the neighing of a horse, or the dream of a good woman, for a divine inspiration or calling. It is true, there might have been amongst them a foundling, who cherished in his bosom that divine fire, by which the dominion over mankind was first procured to privileged souls; but he would then have spoken like Moses, with a slow and stammering tongue, and consequently must have been deprived of the most efficacious remedy, I mean, that power of eloquence which formerly prevailed over men, before it was obliged to be silenced in the presence of a prince. What then

then should such a man do? Why do I ask? He should have recourse to a God, if he could, or make love to a Goddess; he should have his mother got with child by Hercules, and have his laws dropt down from the skies; he should establish priests, mysteries, temples, and miracles; and should get all his enemies and rebellious subjects destroyed by thunder-bolts from heaven. This is what he should do.

“WHAT! should a *man* do this? a man of “exalted understanding, a hero? And should “we approve of lies and tricks?” — Don’t be angry, Sir, for I am apt to believe, that this is the very thing which the first founders of large societies were obliged to submit to, in order to gain a necessary power, a *power* by which they could bring father and mother to the stake, in case they had been guilty of an opposition to the great end of government, the public welfare.

“BUT surely those people who could suffer “themselves to be thus imposed upon, or, “mildly speaking, to be thus ruled and governed, must have been downright fools.” — It is true, my dear vicar, they were not Æmilius’s, but notwithstanding all their simplicity, yet, like him, they wanted to live upon a little hill, in a white house, with green window-shutters

shutters and red tyles, and there to enjoy the produce of their labour, and the fruit of their vines, with peace and tranquillity; and this great purpose they certainly obtained, by suffering themselves to be led by certain fictions of the imagination, and therefore were not altogether fools. — If you are not satisfied, Sir, add to what has been already said, *that no wise man ever betrays the secrets of his art.* — This you'll be pleased to impart to your good friend Mr. Rousseau.

“ Is it then allowed, that bad means may be used to obtain good ends ? ” — Heaven forbid that I should assert any such thing ! No, Sir, understand me rightly ; all this I disapprove of in the highest degree, nor is it at all necessary to my purpose. The only consequence I would draw from all these arguments, and which you must undoubtedly allow, without farther contradiction, is, ‘ That all legislators and founders of large states, both good and bad, have thought *natural religion* insufficient for settling, ruling, or keeping *civil society* within proper limits ; and that, upon this account, they were forced either to have recourse to Gods, and such other imaginary machines, or to a *fixed and established religion.* ’ This you must surely allow.

But what would you think now, if God, whom we both acknowledge, should have had the



the same insight and knowlege of human nature, as those legislators, those genius's, or those impostors, if you please so to term them? What would you think if he had chosen such machines as were becoming his Deity, and correspondent with his great purpose to—*make men happier*? Where would be the improbability of this? Or would he be surpassed in this by human genius's? It is evident he either intended that large societies of men should be formed, or not. If large societies were intended, nothing more is to be done for the necessary conservation thereof, but to have a system of religion, as I have already mentioned, revealed by some means or other, and consequently you will have a *revealed religion*. But if you assert that such societies were not intended, then I shall end the controversy.

THIS revelation indeed may, for what I know, be discoverable by the light of nature, although it is very strange, that all the wise men and legislators that ever existed, could never find it out. Perhaps therefore it lay concealed so deep that it escaped common observation; and, if this is the case, it might be as well out of nature as in it.

“RELIGION then is consequently but a *political engine*, and not designed for the great  
“and

“ and noble end of worshipping God.”—Yes, Sir, religion is a *political engine*, but it is such an one as is framed and employed by God, in his terrestrial dominions; and when we worship, extol, or praise him, then we promote his honor, and the honor of God is the happiness of his creatures. If you can attribute to God a still greater aim, with all my heart; but I shall always deem the honor and glory of God to be inseparably connected with the happiness and perfection of his creatures.

TRY but once, Sir, to reflect upon *revealed religion* in this *low* and *mean* point of view.—David upon the throne, or prostrated in ashes; the sinner upon the threshold of the temple, or under a canopy bordered with golden fringes; the philosopher with a system in his hand, or a child with a rattle, may appear the same to *Almighty God*, or at least we may imagine so, if he could be supposed to view, with a solitary pleasure, the fantastic actions of men, and take delight in speculating on the various passions and sentiments of the human soul.—But *to us* and *civil Society* it is of the greatest consequence that a king be sometimes prostrated in the dust, and that he acknowledge himself before his Maker to be a miserable sinner.—Nothing can prove of more importance to *civil society* than piety and devotion, by which noble and gene-

rous passions and a salutary awe and reverence for the Deity are excited, and men are prepared to encounter all the miseries of life.—Necessity requires the use of a creed, composed of articles founded on the strongest principles of virtue, whereby the unhappy may be comforted, the prosperous restrained, the proud humbled, the monarch controlled, and the avaricious desires of the trader limited.—This, I say, is of the utmost importance to *civil society*. This purpose, it is probable, God might have intended by religion, and I should think it entirely conformable to his divine wisdom, if he had proposed no other end but this by his *revelation*.

BUT you will object to this, and affirm,  
 “ That *natural religion* would still better effect  
 “ the same purpose, not being founded upon  
 “ such ambiguous testimonies. We acknow-  
 “ ledge the Creator by his works, and no doubt  
 “ they are the most eloquent preachers, they  
 “ speak to all eyes and ears, and their language  
 “ is understood by Cherokees and Kalmucks;  
 “ their beauty is founded upon unchangeable  
 “ rules, which make us acquainted with the  
 “ wisest and most powerful being, and conse-  
 “ quently with the duty of loving, admiring,  
 “ and worshipping him. If these dictates of  
 “ nature are strictly pursued, they cannot fail  
 “ of forming in us a sentiment of moral obliga-  
 D “ tion



“ tion or conscience, especially when aided by  
 “ a liberal education, whereby we may be al-  
 “ ways guided right, and the prospect of eter-  
 “ nal punishments and rewards, which I allow  
 “ of, will keep under wicked men, and will  
 “ furnish the legislator with the means of go-  
 “ vernaing and conducting them according to  
 “ his will, and even of inspiring them with an  
 “ enthusiastic courage and contempt of dan-  
 “ ger.”

VERY well, my dear Vicar, I will not yet  
 dispute your theory, but let us appeal to expe-  
 rience, and we shall immediately discover, that  
 all legislators have found this theory insufficient  
 for practice. I have often tried in my imagina-  
 tion, to arm Moses with all the force which  
*natural religion* could afford; I have placed him  
 in the front of an hundred thousand brick-  
 makers, whose sense and judgment had been  
 formed in clay pits, and I have got them to  
 ask him, with a loud and threatening voice,  
*What power has made thee our judge?* Then I  
 have got him to speak of the beauty of the stars,  
 of the awful grandeur of thunder, of the order  
 and proportion which universally subsists even  
 in the minutest parts of the created universe;  
 and have inspired him with all those arguments  
 which the authors of Astro and Physico-theology,  
 &c. have endeavoured to lay before the orderly  
 part

part of mankind, with pretty good success: I have at last made him speak to the route of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, your own arguments on natural theology, and more particularly your opinions about eternal punishments and rewards; but notwithstanding all these endeavours, I never could gain the smallest presumption of these rude and wild people being convinced of the reality of his divine commission to rule over them, especially at the time when absolute necessity required the hanging of whole bodies of them. This I imagine to be the case; if you can form a better opinion of the brick-makers sense and feeling, then I am in the wrong.

BUT in general I think God has no more made the souls of all men according to one scale, than he has appointed all of them to be kings and philosophers. Great part of them cannot comprehend the most evident truths, or the consequences resulting from them, nor can many of them be sufficiently penetrated by these truths to be taught patience and constancy in the sad hours of affliction. There are indeed servile souls upon whom truths must be continually enforced, and there are even kings who cannot feel the force of any other proofs than miracles. The customs, manners, thoughts and comprehensions of men are equally differ-

ent as their stations, tempers and dispositions; and therefore as society consists of all sorts and ranks, the religion must be fit for every member thereof. But if we consult daily experience, we shall find that something more than mere *natural religion* is wanted to accomplish so great a task.

If this was not the case, why are men taught to use poetry and eloquence? To paint in true characters our sentiments and ideas. And why so? Because they are more moved by a speech addressed to their senses, imagination and passions, than by mere abstract reasoning. Now we will for once suppose, that a certain *established religion* was an accommodation of *natural religion* to the senses and imagination of men. And why should not such a supposition be made, seeing an address to the imagination may possibly be founded upon truth. Should not then legislators and founders of states have full liberty to execute such a plan, and to move the minds of men to their own advantage, in the same manner as we find it proper to affect them by poetry and eloquence,—In your *natural religion* you adopted eternal punishments and rewards. Now do me only the favour to draw *heaven* and *hell* before the weak imaginations of some people in the same manner as God has thought proper to represent them, in order  
to



to make the necessary impressions, and then we are already agreed about the first article, namely, " That God could very well bring  
 " some truths to a nearer intuition, and could  
 " realize and fix in the imagination and senses  
 " of mankind by a *revelation*, such principles as  
 " we in *natural religion* could only perceive, by  
 " way of abstract reasoning."

WHEN you demonstrate the existence of God as the first article in your natural theology, you observe, " That there are men who may deny  
 " it, and perhaps men of learning too."—You further remark, " That other people of the  
 " same sort doubt your second article, *viz. the*  
 " *immortality of the soul.*" — You also allow,  
 " That conscience is a very doubtful thing,  
 " because it is to be formed by accidental cir-  
 " cumstances;" — which is the third of your  
 articles. — You must certainly know by expe-  
 rience, that the voice of the works of God  
 which daily strikes the ear, is like the chirping  
 of a Canary bird, which can scarcely be heard  
 by the persons who possess it, though at the  
 same time it may strike the ears of a stranger by  
 its shrillness. And by *this* voice and by *these*  
 principles, you think to form wild brick-makers  
 into a strong, happy and tranquil body of  
 people. But how so, if these human animals  
 could not conceive your arguments on the ex-  
 istence

istence of a God and on the immortality of the soul? If they took their sensual desires for conscience itself, and so chose a wrong judge of their actions? If they suffered the sun to rise and set without thinking on any thing else but their food? If the power of God appeared to them only when the crops in their fields were blasted or burnt up, or when their brick-kilns were struck down by lightning? — Believe me, Sir, your *natural religion* may be very good, but is not sufficient here.

LET tyranny, earthquakes, floods, or other plagues arise, I shall be found, like a second Orpheus, at the foot of a rock, with all the frightened and perplexed children of men before me; to every soul will I give strength and comfort, and pour fresh spirits into every one, by the almighty assistance of a *revealed religion*; when you in vain attempt to preach upon the beauty of the destroyed works of God, in your lofty mountains, to a parcel of dejected doubtful men.

You may ever so frequently reply, that, according to this reasoning, *religion* is nothing else but an *enchanted music*, a *bridle* for the *vulgar*. — All my answer at present upon this head shall be, that all mankind may be stiled *the vulgar*; and in my opinion it is much better that this *bridle* has been put on our minds than in our mouths,

mouths, for somewhere or other I think it was necessarily to be put, in order to guide us to the ends proposed by our Creator. For us *vulgar* and not for *angels* was *our* religion instituted.

WHAT is man? An animal designed to be confined by the chains of imagination. Some men may require a block of five hundred weight to prevent their running away with the fetters, while others perhaps may be ruled by half an ounce; but religion must be possessed of all the different weights for millions and millions of imaginations. Notwithstanding all which, you think to accomplish such an immeasurable plan by some doubtful maxims and uncertain suppositions.

BUT let us proceed. Can we ever attain to a perfect certainty by *natural religion*? No. Is this certainty a prerogative of *revealed religion*? No. Why not? For that very reason because we are *men*. The fault cannot be ascribed to *God*, but to that degree of knowledge which is given to our share among the infinite ranks and orders of creatures. We might have been all created angels, and all animals might have made the same pretensions. We might by our reasonings demonstrate, that God Almighty could not properly have created more than one single creature, the nearest possible in perfection to himself,



himself, (in which case neither you nor I had ever existed) and that single creature might have asked his Creator, why he had not done an impossibility, and made him a *second God*. All this we might do, were we foolish enough to believe that we, as *men*, ought to be possessed of higher intellectual powers than have been allotted us for our share.——

“ BUT what is the consequence ? ” you will ask ; “ For what end shall we change an *uncertain natural* for an *uncertain revealed religion* ? ” — To be sure that should not be done ; but suppose now that no choice has here been left us, that the performance of certain duties could not have been secured but by the enforcements of a revelation and creed, as I now do suppose ; that the portion of our knowledge is not, nor could have been greater than just to let us, in our middle sphere, know something and believe something, and that we could have had no other choice than between different revelations ; in which case you must certainly allow, that the advantage would depend on chusing the best revelation, and no more on the instability of *natural religion*. You must further grant, that it is even the *uncertainty* of things which, at the same time that it is a source of pleasure, makes us capable of being ruled and governed by a superior wisdom.

BUT you may probably here stop my career, and cry out after me, "What is truth? what is probability? who knows all religions? who has compared them all together? or who is capable of thoroughly examining the nature of each, in order to form a judgment of all?"—Either all religions that promote the advantage of civil society, the happiness and welfare of mankind, and the perfection of the whole, are equally good, and consequently it makes no difference whether we give our sincere approbation to one or the other; or that religion, which demands the preference, and is cruel enough to shut the door of heaven against us, must needs have a very distinguishing character, and most remarkable signatures; and if these signatures cannot be found, the safest method is to follow that religion in which we have been educated. This has given to our conscience its present plaits and folds, and it is difficult to unfold them again, and most dangerous to CIVIL SOCIETY not to act according to conscience. This you will say, and I am fully sensible of all the force of your arguments.

BUT now, in the first place, what signatures do you want? Human testimonies are fallible; yes! fallible. *Miracles*, says Hume, cannot be judged of, or vouched for by men, merely because they are *miracles*, and consequently not

frequent enough to admit of comparison one with another, or with things like them. If men were to rise from the dead, they would notwithstanding be men again; and angels, I think, must assume a very doubtful and ambiguous figure if they were to present themselves to our view. If God should appear to us in a flame of fire, or in thunder, our eyes could only discern the blaze or our ears hear the sound. Neither of these phænomenons could be any thing but burning and thundering. Or were superior beings to assume a human voice, then you would say, "What business have I with men? Every where I have still the testimony of men, and why may not thunder itself lie like a man?"—In short, I do imagine, at least, according to our pneumato-theology, that God could reveal and make himself known to men in any figure whatever, but not without leaving us under some doubt, whether a God was really contained therein or not. Nay, if he appeared every day to every man, of every age or disposition, I believe a *Copernicus* or a *Newton* would then invent some curve, by which they would demonstrate that these apparitions ought to be ascribed to the ordinary course of nature. *Mau-pertuis* would find it *foolish* to put God to the expence of so many miracles, if he could rule us by the mere appearance of them without the reality;



reality; and if the word of God were to be showered down in written characters from the sky, then Mr. Rousseau without doubt would establish a printing-house in the moon. We philosophers would do this most certainly.—How forcible is this argument? “If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, then they will not believe though one rose from the dead.”—Both the philosopher and man are stiff-necked people, five hundred weight cannot hold them.

WHAT would you think now, if we were more equitable in our claims, and were not to demand any other signs of God but such as fall within the reach of our five natural senses, or are suitable to our reason and understanding? If we would act thus we should soon renounce our longing desires for extraordinary signs, and at length acknowledge the vanity of looking for winged apostles in this terrestrial world, to preach the truth out of the clouds to us.

WHAT would you further think, if I should make bold to oppose you with this observation, ‘That the oeconomy of every religion absolutely requires this public assertion, *that there is no salvation out of it!*’—It seems to me that a religion without this axiom cannot produce

its proper effects in civil society ; at least I think that if the following doctrine was inserted in capital letters in a public catechism, that ONE MIGHT BE SAVED IN ALL RELIGIONS, such a doctrine would very much lessen that enthusiasm which is necessary to be kept up. I, for instance, in my thoughtless puerile days, should certainly have reasoned thus : ‘ Let my mind have its full scope, and if it does not bring forth truths, it will at least produce fancies, and every religion is acceptable to God.’——So certainly I should have argued, unless my father had concealed from my view a little longer the important doctrine of the indifferency of all religions, and had first inspired me with a prejudice against this opinion you have adopted. When I had attained to riper years and more discretion, I might perhaps have been reasonable enough not to suffer myself to be put out of the way by it. But the *world of children*, who never arrive to the age of manly understanding, I should always have pitied. Such an indifferency would, in my humble opinion, have deprived every religion of the power of laying hold of the conscience, which, however, is necessary for obtaining the purposes of an oath, which, though so awful and tremendous a thing, is yet absolutely requisite in *civil society*. This induces me to believe, that every religion, in its public doctrine, must

must exclude all others, and leave to the philosopher alone a salutary uncertainty for the subject of his speculation.

THE eternity of the hell-torments has already met with many objections. The uncertainty of this doctrine is of no bad consequence, nay perhaps it has been left doubtful on purpose, in order to leave us between fear and hope, and to prevent despair; but the public certainty of the contrary, that is to say, a divine declaration of the short duration of these punishments, might for many reasons be dangerous.

THIS being supposed, I will now proceed to answer your question, "Whether, while matters are thus situated, and there is no possibility of making comparisons in every religion, so as by examination to chuse the best, it would not be most proper for every man to persevere in the religion in which he has been educated."

I answer, We cannot *publicly* establish this as an irreversible rule without approving of all religions which aim at the welfare and interest of society, and we cannot approve of all religions without lessening the particular power of each in binding the consciences of men. And as soon as we lessen the power of conscience, we immediately abolish all the civil benefit which can result from any religion whatsoever; wherefore



we will agree in this manner, that it is pernicious and destructive to assert, by a public doctrine of the church, the indifferency of all religions which are established in the world, and are well calculated for the purposes of civil society, and that your friend Mr. Rousseau did not show himself a master in his art, when he resolved to make such an article a public doctrine.

HOWEVER, I beg this agreement may only be current between us; for what I here speak is only addressed personally to you, because I only answer to your objections. But, Sir, in the mean while, ponder once more the arguments of the greatest men upon the probability of the Christian religion. You have given trial of your skill, how strongly one may argue for it, and if you will but suppose an *established religion* necessary, your choice will not meet with so many difficulties as before.

As I have now ventured on one position, I will make bold to advance another, viz. 'that religion dares not depend merely on logical syllogisms; for this cannot be done, without allowing every man's reason to be a judge.'—The school-boy, as well as his master, must be suffered to give his judgment of it, unless a certain interpretation of the dictates of nature and

and reason be fixed by some *power* or other. And in whom should this *trust* be vested? In an *oracle*? We should then have a revelation again.—In a *prince*? We would hardly grant him so much pre-eminence of sense and understanding, and very likely in this case a lord-treasurer might be the high-priest to interpret the religion of nature.—In an *assembled clergy*? Well, but would we not immediately ask, Do they speak all this by their own, or by divine power? And so we should at last come either to a revelation, or to human inventions. Besides, Sir, the priests of nature would not certainly assemble from both poles, in order to make one general interpretation, as you seem to pretend; and if the *Black* and *White* held separate synods and councils, then we should have two interpretations, which in all probability might differ very much from each other.—In an *assembled people*? This to be sure would naturally be best of all. The *voice* of the *people* would be stiled the *voice* of *God*; but would the people pay the same reverence to a religion of their own making, as they would do to a revelation? Would it be even possible to make them agree together? and would not the remembrance of their disputes, and of the passions raised thereby, hurt and lessen the power of religion? Would not Voltaire, from the destruction of Lisbon, suppose the author of nature to be malevolent?

And

And would not Candide suppose him to be good when he is seated near his fine damsel upon the sofa?

INDEED all these difficulties are great, and I am ready to believe that all those people that have had recourse to *oracles* did likewise perceive them. The *oracles* are very good instances to prove the necessity of a *revelation*. The above-mentioned difficulties brought the wisest men back to this extremity. They could not give to their interpretation of *nature* the sanctity that was requisite, without deriving it from God. They could not preserve it for want of letters, without causing it to be delivered every day from God; and this was done by an *oracle*. —See, Sir, how far necessity led prudent men in their inventions; and what inventions? to establish and consecrate peace, friendship, love, and other social virtues, as the essential duties of men; to interweave the idea of a deity, there where they were afraid that the *bands of natural religion* might burst in pieces.

THERE is a strange disposition in men towards wonderful and extraordinary things, such as apparitions, spectres, forebodings, secret operations of nature, and all these things which force even philosophers to confess, *we don't yet know every thing*. —Those great men who have argued



argued and written against this superstitious disposition of mind have succeeded well enough; so far as at least to prevent it from being dangerous; but however they could not radically extirpate it, and many people are now ashamed to confess publicly, what in their private thoughts they confess to themselves.—But may not this propensity of mind be accounted for from some higher reasons? Horses have a tender mouth in order that a bridle may the better rule them; and perhaps this disposition has been implanted in us, in order that we may the better be carried by it to execute the wise purposes of nature. Do but imagine yourself that we had not such a disposition of mind, and suppose that our brain was so constituted that it could not be affected by any thing but mathematical demonstrations, should we then be possessed of that tender sensibility, that easy credulity, which so much contributes to our pleasure? We must then either look into the very bottom of every thing, (which pretension is however very absurd) or we are now a great deal happier, because we are sooner and more easily satisfied. It is true enough, this disposition is very apt to kindle the fire of superstition; but good-nature, kindness, and generosity, are not less liable to be misled. This you know yourself, and have not censured such qualities neither. Indeed *man* is a curious,

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wonderful,

wonderful, and incomprehensible being ; he is both the master and the fool of all his fellow-creatures. We have conjectures and systems concerning the end and design of his existence, but viewing him only as he stands in relation to this life, and the rank he there holds, I find by experience that it is necessary for him to be led and tamed by various ways and means.

ONE important reflection more, my dear Sir, I must acquaint you with, earnestly intreating you to consider it by yourself, in its full compass and extent. Do you believe that *natural religion* can invest a priest with all that *political sanctity*, which all nations have unanimously approved of. Though every man is demonstrably sacred in regard to every other ; though the states of the empire, and the representatives of other realms are, in consequence of their office and particular compacts and laws, to be considered as sacred persons, yet both of them for all that have not always been able to resist the tyrannical power of princes. But the order of priests has been a great deal more feared and spared ; the people have attributed to this order a particular character of sanctity, and God perhaps wisely managed it thus for the welfare and greater security of mankind ; at least I think it absolutely necessary that truth and prejudice, or any thing else you please, must join together in order

order to keep up this *political sanctity*, this divine mark of infallibility, and to preserve the greater reverence for this order.

VIEW only all those states and countries out of which a part of this truth, or this important prejudice if you please, has been banished by *Thomasius*, or his successors. The bishops, canons, and other ecclesiastics, have cast off with their black robes the character of their order. They are not feared more than other men. The parson is become a despised laborious husbandman.

IMPRUDENT politicians in some countries invested the sovereign even with the administration of the ecclesiastical revenues, and not only rendered him master of all the benefices, but also deprived the ecclesiastics of their right of voting. The sanctity of common sense, by which the secular states were supported, is vanished away, and it is but a meer chance that the sovereign is just ; if he be not, no body can oblige him to be so.—Come on now with your natural religion, and transform all the clergy into ordinary men, lessen the opinion of the common people concerning them, and say, that the Holy Ghost does no longer in a particular manner dwell in them, fortify therewith the sovereign against heaven and hell, against



tumults and insurrections; what advantage do you think would arise from that? Indeed the *Reformation* was of great service to a *Roman Catholic Prince*, but the *Roman Catholic Religion* is still at present of great service to *Protestant Subjects*; in this religion the *political sanctity* of the *Clergy* is much better preserved. It has not yet been suppressed by the double-edged conclusion, *That no STATE within a STATE ought to be endured*; which in its undeterminate compass may as well be dangerously as usefully employed. It is true, that the episcopal rights are now justly united, under one head, with those of the prince of the country, but most happily not so mixed together, but one may distinguish the various places and charges, or the office of High Steward from the Sovereign himself.—All those who robbed the *Clergy* of their *political sanctity*, which cannot be sufficiently founded upon any thing else but a divine revelation; all those, I say, brought down upon mankind a very great calamity; for we need not have been afraid, that the clergy would have abused their power, given by us, since the Sovereign keeps up a perpetual military force.

“NEVER,” (said once a Turkish statesman to me) “never mind the *Musti*’s being ever so bad  
 “a man, do but kneel before him in the dust,  
 “if thou art a subject to the *Grand Sultan*;  
 “for

“ for he and his clergy are the only sacred rocks  
 “ behind which thou canst screen thyself, if the  
 “ tyrant should be seeking after thee. Does  
 “ God Almighty grant thee, in his wrath, thy  
 “ demand, allowing thee to venerate the worthy  
 “ clergyman alone, and to despise the unworthy  
 “ one publicly; then dost thou destroy the *poli-*  
 “ *tical sanctity* of this Order, and the tyrant will  
 “ readily accept of this thy distinction, and that  
 “ priest who is to justify and vindicate thy cause,  
 “ he will call an unworthy advocate, and for  
 “ this reason condemn him to be killed, and  
 “ then he will afterwards kill thee also.”——

So reasoned a *Turk*, who was not a Donatist,  
 and who did not affirm, That the force of the  
 word of God depended only upon the behaviour  
 of the priests. —— “ What would become of  
 “ Spain and Portugal, since they lost their laws,  
 “ if the ecclesiastics did not prevent the exor-  
 “ bitant use of the sovereign power.”——This  
 is what *Montesquieu* says, and I don’t urge any  
 more but this, that *natural religion* cannot effect  
 so great an advantage, and that there are in  
 some countries such political regulations esta-  
 blished, by which the horrible inquisition is  
 turned to a necessary evil, and to a sacred bridle  
 for despotic power,

Now you are perhaps in expectation of my  
 taking in hand the defence of the truth of our  
*Christian*

*Christian religion*; but here I must own to you sincerely, that I am not a *Divine*, but a *Lawyer*. I only drew up my thoughts in such a manner as I am apt to believe every impartial man, who knows but something of our religion, might have done. I beheld the defects of some sorts of human societies, and the accidents they were liable to; I considered the distempers of these great political associations, whether they are called monarchies, aristocracies, democracies or tyrannies; and I have concluded that a *revealed religion* has always been necessary and useful to them. I next found, that the *Christian religion* answered, in the highest degree of perfection every purpose a Supreme Being could ever intend for the good of mankind, and from this I drew the conclusion, *that it would be foolish to weaken, and still more so to tear to pieces so perfect a band.*

To conclude, I intreat you to tell your good friend Mr. Rousseau, that it is not at all difficult for so great a genius as he is, who can consider an object in a thousand different views, to assert something contrary to the common opinion of mankind, and to sacrifice every particular truth for the sake of some pretended higher design, though really with a worldly aim, like a hero, who lays aside all civil laws, and sets a temple justly on fire, lest it should impede his victory.



BE pleased to tell him, that *Arlaud's* beautiful picture of *Leda* was cut to pieces by *himself*, though it was the most perfect expression of a *naked truth*. Show him by this, that there are *offensive* and *scandalous truths*; and that we call such a thing *scandalous* which is contrary to the *purposes* of *Civil Society*. Perhaps he will quickly ask, Whether *Religion* should even submit to the *purposes* of *Civil Society*; and whether the *theory* of the *Christian religion* did not do even the contrary?—But I shall never be at an end; perhaps these questions I may answer another time; till then, farewel.—

QSNABRUCK,  
Nov. 2, 1762.

J. MOSER.

